

86 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

Spring 1977

A CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF
INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS ON FOREIGN POLICY

by

Lieutenant Commander James T. Westwood, U.S. Navy

Intelligence operations fall into three broad categories: (1) those by which "raw" data are collected, processed into "finished" information, and disseminated; (2) those conducted to counter-intelligence operations, of whatever kind, of rivals; and (3) those intelligence operations undertaken to influence the course of events, sometimes called clandestine or covert operations. All three kinds of intelligence operations will have an impact on foreign policy. This impact will vary in both scope and degree, because it is policy which gives rise to intelligence operations.

In the affairs of politically organized mankind, there is a ladder of actions which commences with variegated, often amorphous qualities that have come to be called *national interests*. In turn, the element of *policy* gives a certain form and direction to national interests, and from policy comes a scheme or plan of action which is *strategy*. Strategy, in its turn, is implemented by one or more tactics. Thus, intelligence operations are really tactics. There is little or nothing in this view that is mysterious and even less, if anything, that is unreasonable. Where there is no policy, there hardly will be any strategy—or tactics. Where policy is large and encompassing, it must naturally be expected that intelligence operations will occur. That these operations exist and flourish will not be a secret. Indeed, it will be a matter of the widest public awareness. Only certain sources, certain detailed methods, and the degrees of relative success, it is to be hoped—and expected—will be secret.

William E. Colby, the former Director of Central Intelligence, has said that intelligence will not work if exposed. He is quite correct. Exposures and exposes which reveal sources, methods, and degrees of accomplishment are fundamentally damaging in the long term and are critically detrimental to states' interests and policies. That is why such acts are forbidden by and severely punishable under law. One marvels at any group or individual who seriously supposes that a state and its leadership will forego an opportunity to further what it regards to be its interests or, generally, hesitate to defend those interests and policies. After all, men organize collectively for protection against common enemies and for the promotion of a concept of their welfare, i.e., the furtherance of their interests. In so doing they elaborate policies to promote their interests. Intelligence operations of all types are essential and integral to this process, and it is nothing short of amazing that governments, their critics, and their populations at large regularly lose sight of these fundamental conditions and premises. To argue that intelligence operations can be abrogated or suspended is tantamount to expecting that men, organized for political and social purposes have no interests. Intelligence operations are as old as organized man and as new as the most current demands made on them. Though sometimes seemingly independent, they fall closely in line with the patterns of behavior and the values of peoples and their governments.

The contemporary confusion that